

October 17, 2005

The Honorable Peter King  
Chairman  
Committee on Homeland Security  
LA-202 Adams  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman King:

I am writing to request that the Homeland Security Committees hold public hearings with Homeland Security Secretary Chertoff and other security and preparedness experts to discuss plans to prevent and respond to an outbreak of avian flu. Secretary Leavitt recently announced that the administration soon would put forth a plan to encourage development of a more robust domestic flu vaccine industry, including elements that would promote an expansion of U.S. manufacturing capacity. This plan reportedly will cost between \$6 billion and \$10 billion. I urge the Homeland Security Committee to conduct close oversight of the administration's plans, beginning with public hearings to thoroughly examine them.

An avian flu outbreak could have devastating security and public health consequences – including millions of deaths - and we must ensure that the administration's plan will be effective to combat the emergence and spread of the H5N1 avian flu strain and other deadly strains. An effective response to an outbreak would require Federal and state government coordination, rapid public health and emergency medical response, and widespread efforts to preserve public order. As evidenced by the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, there are major deficiencies in our government's ability to perform these vital functions.

I encourage the Committee to promptly hold oversight hearings, and I look forward to your response.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Edward J. Markey

cc.  
The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson  
Ranking Member  
Homeland Security Committee  
LA-228  
Washington, DC 20515

